

SUMMER 2001

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs

Prevention File



☐ Prevention Super Heroes:
Oregon Partnership and Red Robin

☐ Selling Smoking . . .
in the Movies?

☐ New Battleground
in the Tobacco Wars

Not-So-Soft Drinks

Are teenagers lured to drinking alcohol by sweet, fruity "alcohol pop" drinks, such as Mike's Hard Lemonade, Tequila, Sublime, and Hooper's Hooch?

Yes, says Washington, DC-based Center for Science in the Public Interest. It contends that teens in focus groups and other studies admit to downing "hard lemonades" and other fruit-flavored malt beverages and plans to petition the federal government to crack down on marketing that appeals to underage drinkers.

"They may believe they are targeting adults," said George Hacker, JD, director of CSPI's alcohol policy program. "But these products disguise the taste of alcohol and make it easier to drink. They are intended as bridges to other forms of alcohol."

But producers of the new alcoholic beverages deny any attempt to create a teen-drinking market; saying there are plenty of adults of legal drinking age who prefer these alternative malt beverages.

"Adults like the taste of 'malternatives,'" said Jeff Becker, president of the Beer Institute, a trade group of brewers.

According to *Beverage Retailer* magazine, the fruit-flavored brews are rivaling the 1980s popularity of wine coolers. Sales of the drinks, which are available in lemon, apple, berry, and orange, were about \$90 million, or 4.1 million cases, last year, the magazine said.

Last Call for Last Call?

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair has announced plans to permit pubs to stay open up to 24 hours a day as part of that country's most radical overhaul in drinking laws in almost a century.

The government says that scrapping the early closing time of will reduce binge drinking and "yob" behavior—when drinkers belt back as much as they can at the 11 p.m. "last call" before being turned out of their pubs at 11:20 p.m. Once on the streets, drunken brawls are common.

"Our licensing laws are outdated, complex, and in need of a radical overhaul," said Mike O'Brien,

the junior Home Office minister. The government first floated the plan to eliminate the early closing requirement in a discussion paper a year ago.

But Alcohol Concern, an organization dedicated to reducing problems caused by alcohol use, is worried that the reforms will do no good. "What we have to change is the drinking culture, where we drink to get drunk," said director Eric Appleby.

He agrees that the early-closing law—adopted during World War I to control drinking by armament workers—doesn't work. But Appleby warns that looser licensing laws could be "a recipe for violence and disorder in town and city centers" unless accompanied by new guidelines allowing municipalities to restrict all-night licenses.

Something That Works

A recent report says that state laws setting lower alcohol limits for teenage drivers appear to reduce the number of young people who drink and drive (*American Journal of Public Health*, May 2001).

"When you lower the blood-alcohol limit, it changes the behavior of people," said the lead author of the study, Alexander C. Wagenaar, PhD, of the University of Minnesota. "And the change is very significant in terms of the health and safety of the states that do it."

But the study also found that a lack of public awareness about the laws among both teenagers and adults was blunting their effect. For example, a 1997 Gallup survey found that 36 percent of the driving-age public did not know about the laws, prompting the researchers to say that law-enforcement authorities should do more to make them known.

While the legal blood-alcohol content for adults is usually limited to 0.1 or 0.08, for teenager drivers the limit is much lower, and sometimes zero. The lower limits for teens now on the books in all 50 states were prompted by a federal law that threatens to cut highway aid for states without the lower limits.

Researchers asked the students how many times they had drunk alcohol and driven in the previous week, or driven after having had at least five drinks. They also asked whether they had ridden with a driver who had been drinking. Results showed that the incidence of driving after drinking dropped after blood-alcohol laws were changed. The amount of drinking and driving reported by the students went down overall by 19 percent, and 23 percent when the question involved five or more drinks.

Growing Tobacco-Related Deaths Worldwide

The World Health Organization warned that if current trends in tobacco consumption continue, more than 250 million children alive today will die from smoking-related illnesses in years to come.

According to a report released by WHO, tobacco use among young people continues to increase. The report further noted that people who start smoking during adolescence often continue using into adulthood.

In addition to direct use of tobacco, the report stated that more than 700 million children worldwide are affected by breathing secondhand smoke.

The report criticized tobacco companies for spending billions of dollars a year promoting a product that encourages children to take up a behavior that is harmful to their physical, mental, and social development.

A New Resource on the Internet

It's a big, big, world out there, but the globe is virtually shrinking for prevention professionals and others thanks to the Virtual Clearinghouse for Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs on the Internet. The clearinghouse acts as a portal to pertinent full-text policies, research reports, evaluated program summaries, and compiled statistics from 31 partner organizations spanning the globe, including elements of the World Health Organization, national governments, and nongovernmental organizations.

Features include an extensive search capacity and an international summation of reports on economic impacts of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. The Clearinghouse, at www.atod.org, received its early launch from the Canadian Center on Substance Abuse (hosting the site from Ottawa), European Librarians and Information Specialists on Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists.

Recently, Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs has provided funds for a full-time coordinator, Elizabeth Lozano, ushering in a new round of growth. Libraries and resource centers that meet eligibility criteria can become partner organizations in the Virtual Clearinghouse. For more information, visit the site or contact coordinator Lozano at elozano@ccsa.ca. Lozano reported on Virtual Clearinghouse advances at the SALIS 23rd Annual Conference, held May 2001, in Anchorage.

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PREVENTION

Oregon Partnership and Red Robin

By Christopher Curtis

HOW DID A MODEST OREGON PREVENTION ORGANIZATION and one of America's largest restaurant chains end up working together as prevention advocates? It wasn't easy... especially when it looked as though the restaurant might be target-

ing sales of alcoholic beverages to kids. In fact, you might say it took a "super" effort to break down barriers,

achieve common ground, and learn to collaborate as partners. Here's how it happened.

It started like any controversy usually does... like a calm before a storm. Red Robin, one of America's premier family-friendly restaurant chains, was planning its summer promotion in 1999. The goal? Come up with a family-friendly campaign that reached all ages and created a "buzz" around its new summer drink menu. Some of the drinks were alcoholic, others were not—all of them were fun to look at and designed to look the same, making it difficult to tell which were which.

Red Robin based its campaign on a cartoon character called the Mad Mixologist who creates Meltdowns, a team of superhero beverages, in his laboratory in order to defeat a super villain called Heatwave. Eli Stone, best known for his comic book hero The Tick, created original artwork and a storyline for the elaborate promotional campaign. Red Robin distributed the comic books at its locations across the country. Following the campaign theme, the drinks were presented to customers in unique, collectable cups that included a test tube wrapped in a crazy straw. The test tubes contained flavoring—alcoholic for cocktails; syrup for "mocktails" that could be added to drinks by customers themselves, effectively allowing guests to play the role of a Mad Mixologist.

Red Robin's clever campaign accomplished its goal... but not without some unintended consequences. At the same time the company racked



SUPER HEROES:

up strong summer sales due to the promotion, it also racked up a record number of headaches for the Red Robin marketers and public relations teams. What the company didn't know was that in creating a campaign that used cartoon characters and cheery, fun-looking drinks, it was inadvertently appealing to kids. In so doing, it also managed to raise the eyebrows of local prevention advocates.

The Controversy

Elizabeth Buskirk remembers walking into Red Robin with her husband. "I often go to Red Robin, because I know it's family-friendly," she said, thinking of her grandchildren. "That's why I was surprised to find comic books on the table that promoted alcohol. I couldn't believe it!"

What she saw confused and alarmed her: comic books and displays that promoted alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks together; caped staff members dressed up like the super heroes in the promotional materials; messages that seemed geared to a much younger audience both in style and in substance. All of these materials were sending a message that sent off alarm bells for her. Fortunately, she knew where to go . . . Buskirk works at the Oregon Partnership, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to alcohol and other drug prevention and treatment referral that receives funding from the Robert Wood Johnson's Reduce Underage Drinking program.

"I knew this was important, and I knew that we had a chance to make a difference," she said.

Oregon Partnership acted swiftly. Objecting to the promotion on grounds that kids were being subjected to alcohol marketing, it recommended the promotion be stopped on grounds that:

- The campaign appealed to minors through use of a comic book and superhero format.
- Promotional materials drew only subtle distinctions between alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages—all the drink names corresponded to superhero names.
- Guests, including minors, were encouraged to order additional drinks from the menu, which stated: "Enjoy the resulting mocktails and cocktails and repeat."

Oregon Partnership established that Red Robin not only inadvertently targeted children through the cartoon promotion, but that they were, in fact, in violation of an Oregon Liquor Control Commission regulation that clearly prohibits advertising if it contains materials "so appealing to minors that it encourages them to purchase, possess, or drink alcoholic beverages."

When cartoons and cocktails meet, kids get caught in the middle. That's why Oregon Partnership acted quickly to contact Red Robin and offer constructive criticism and ideas for changing course on its promotion.

"We were just scratching our heads thinking we had just barely gotten rid of Joe Camel, and now we have to go out and prevent superheroes

from selling alcohol to kids," said Judy Cushing, executive director of Oregon Partnership. "We were determined to change this promotion and the message it sent to kids."

When made aware of this violation and the criticism leveled at the campaign, Red Robin corporate management had two choices: fight the criticism and continue with the cartoon promotions, or reach out to the community, listen to what people had to say, and work together to make changes.

Once all the facts were out and much of the controversy had hit the newspapers, Red Robin acted quickly and decisively. After a flurry of correspondence and meetings between Oregon Partnership and Red Robin executives, Neil Culbertson, vice president of marketing for Red Robin International, flew to Oregon to meet with the Oregon Partnership and the Governor's Task Force on Underage Drinking.

"It did feel a bit like walking into the lion's den," he recalled. "But, I knew that this was a misunderstanding and that there were positive steps we could take to remedy the situation—and to learn more about the prevention work to which these groups are so committed."

Prevention advocates were impressed with Red Robin's concern and prompt attention to the issues, as well as its willingness to hear out their concerns. "We were prepared to hear some sort of industry line," admits Cushing. "I was very impressed with Red Robin's willingness to meet with us, begin a constructive dialogue, and ultimately partner with us in a variety of ways."

MAD MIXOLOGY MIX-UP: HOW THE STORY BEGAN . . .

" . . . Herman became a Heatwave while he was tampering with Myron's final school chemistry project. Myron's robotic Mai Tai umbrella unexpectedly burst into a cascade of flames, damaging Herman (both in body and in spirit) and forcing him to retreat to the hottest depths of the earth (read: Florida) where he was not seen as such an anomaly. Ten years later, Herman has decided to seek his REVENGE..."

These are the drinks that will foil Herman's evil plans!

- The Razz: Mocktail Makes cryogenics look like a day on the beach.
- Bionic Banana Berry: Mocktail Colder than Eskimo toes.
- Berry Blast: This one even scares polar bears.
- Mega Melon: So cold that a man in a really cold place said, "That's cold."
- The Blue Bomber: This one's frostier than licking a flagpole in the dead of winter.

In the end, Red Robin reassessed its summer promotional campaign and decided to start over with different menus, different messages, and a clear conscience.

First, Red Robin moved all of the existing promotional materials into the age-restricted bar sections of its restaurants. Next, it went back to the drawing board of the marketing campaign and decided it wasn't worth implementing a planned "phase two" of the promotion. Instead, Red Robin opted for a new campaign for summer drinks focusing more on nonalcoholic beverages, with appropriate and deliberate signage illustrating which drinks were alcoholic and which were not—and more importantly, a campaign that did not use cartoons for promotional purposes.

"The only sensible decision to make was to work together through this controversy," said Culbertson. "It took some effective listening skills to figure out how we could see each other's position on this issue, but we were absolutely committed to making something positive out of this misunderstanding. We sincerely appreciated the questions raised by the Oregon Partnership; they helped educate us on ways we could be more aware of the issues surrounding underage drinking."

Cushing agrees. "While controversy can raise awareness, the most important thing for us was to have a positive outcome," she said. "If both sides are so entrenched that they never come to any understanding, then nothing ever changes. Our goal was to make progress, satisfy all parties . . . and make sure that kids had a safe place to be when they're munching away on their Red Robin hamburgers."

Both sides realized early on that this was a classic case of some great marketers simply generating a 'buzz' around their product, but with unintended negative consequences. Both sides also realized that they had much more to gain by working together than by playing superhero and super villain on the issues.

Dynamic Duo

Since the initial controversy over the Mad Mixologist campaign, Oregon Partnership and Red Robin have become partners in prevention. Red Robin included Oregon Partnership in some early discussions of marketing plans to ensure there would be no problems with its future campaigns. In late 1999, Red Robin sponsored a series of public service announcements and

THESE ARE THE DRINKS THAT WILL FOIL HERMAN'S EVIL PLANS!



THE RAZZ MOCKTAIL
Makes cryogenics look like a day on the beach.



BIONIC BANANA BERRY MOCKTAIL
Colder than Eskimo toes.



BERRY BLAST
This one even scares polar bears.



MEGA MELON
So cold that a man in a really cold place said, "That's cold."



THE BLUE BOMBER
This one's frostier than licking a flagpole in the dead of winter.

SERVED IN GLASSES YOU CAN TAKE HOME!
PLEASE SEE YOUR TABLE DISPLAY FOR BEVERAGE DESCRIPTIONS AND PRICES.

offered free sundaes to kids wearing red ribbons during Oregon Partnership's campaign for Red Ribbon Week. By all accounts the joint publicity ventures have been a great success.

"Our goal is to provide the best burgers and beverages in a fun atmosphere while being a responsible community partner," said Culbertson. He points out that being socially responsible is also good business practice. "Working with Oregon Partnership on Red Ribbon Week has strengthened our ties to Oregon communities."

Today, Oregon Partnership and Red Robin are working together on a special 2001 Red Ribbon/Red Robin promotion. This "dynamic duo" is working on joint promotion of Red Ribbon Week, which includes more planning, a broader public service campaign, and more recognition for kids wearing red ribbons at Red Robin restaurants. ☐

Christopher Curtis is communications director of the Oregon Partnership.

How to Prevent Underage Drinking?

Focus on Adults

AMERICAN COMMUNITIES
SHOULD STOP CONCENTRATING
ON YOUNG PEOPLE as the target

for prevention of underage drinking and instead focus on adults who create the environment making alcohol appealing and accessible to youth.

That challenge came from Richard Yoast, PhD, director of the American Medical Association's Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, at a Substance Abuse Summit in San Diego. The summit, which was the sixth in a series for San Diego County, was aimed at

making parents more active in community-prevention coalitions. The message from Yoast is that parents are part of the problem.

"Youth can't control alcohol prices. They can't control alcohol taxes. They can't control alcohol advertising and promotions. They can't control alcohol laws and regulations, nor can they control the governments and voters who do control these things," Yoast said. "So we need to stop holding youth responsible for the whole problem. They are the result of an environment we have created.

"This doesn't mean young people should not be held responsible for their own behavior, but just because we hold kids

responsible doesn't mean we shouldn't hold adults responsible."

Yoast delivered the keynote address at Substance Abuse Summit VI in San Diego, an annual two-day countywide gathering bringing together more than 800 representatives of local communities—law enforcement, education, business, health and welfare agencies, and parents. The theme of the 2001 summit was Parents as Community Partners in Prevention.

Yoast described an environment created by adults that parades appealing images of alcohol consumption before children, that assures prices of alcoholic beverages remain relatively

Youth can't control alcohol prices. They can't control alcohol taxes. They can't control alcohol advertising and promotions.



Richard Yoast

A CONNECTION BETWEEN BEER ADS AND TEEN DRINKING?

Whether alcohol ads affect adolescent alcohol use has been a hotly debated topic in the prevention field. Now a new study from the National Institute on Media and the Family finds that beer advertisements do indeed lead to adolescent drinking.

Researchers at the Institute applied the premise that advertising has four goals: to (1) build brand awareness/recognition, (2) build brand preference, (3) influence product purchase/use, and (4) build brand loyalty, and conducted correlation analyses to determine whether the amount of money spent by beer companies to advertise selected beer brands predicts students' brand awareness, preference, use, and loyalty.

"We believe this is the first study using the advertising industry's own methods to examine adolescent alcohol attitudes and behaviors," said Douglas Gentile, PhD, director of research at the Institute. "Junior and senior high school students know about, prefer, and drink the most heavily advertised brands of beer."

"These results are particularly important now, because the hard-liquor industry is starting to advertise on radio and television," said David Walsh, PhD, coauthor of the study. "If beer advertisements get kids to drink, then eventually so will hard-liquor ads."

For more information on the study, which was presented at the Society for Research in Child Development biennial meeting in Minneapolis in April, visit the Institute Website at www.mediafamily.org or call 888/672-5437.

low, and soft-pedals the adverse consequences related to alcohol use. Alcohol companies like to pose as the friends of young people, he said. They sponsor sports and music events that are popular with youths. Surveys have shown that children are more likely than adults to believe what they see in advertisements and often do not understand the risks involved in drinking.

"We don't have to assume that children are adults. They are not adults. They need a kind of protection and nourishing that adults do not need. We need to think of alcohol in terms of a double standard—what applies to adults and what applies to children. The same standard should not apply to both."

Yoast said most of the information about alcohol circulating in America comes from the alcohol industry and is aimed at increasing sales of alcoholic beverages. Where alcohol problems are concerned, the industry's theme is to blame them on people who use alcohol and

not on the product itself. Educators and government agencies should be more active in assuring that results of research on the impact of alcohol on health and safety is disseminated impartially.

Yoast did not exclude the medical profession from his criticism of the role of adults in dealing with alcohol problems. "We're asking parents to talk to their kids about alcohol and drugs. Well, how many doctors talk to their patients about this? That's a key interaction that I think we're missing."

City councils and other local legislative bodies should recognize the public's right to protection from the impact of alcohol consumption, Yoast said. "All children, adolescents, and young adults, have the right to grow up in an environment that protects them from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and, to the extent possible, from the promotion of alcoholic bev-

erages." He pointed to successful efforts in many cities to limit the exposure of children to billboard advertising of alcohol and tobacco. It is a myth, he said, that advertisers have a constitutional right to advertise as they please.

Many adults are insensitive to the issue of advertising alcohol to children. Until a prevention coalition blew the whistle, he said, the state of Texas was distributing a booklet on state parks that was "full of alcohol ads," ignoring the fact that the booklet was given mainly to children.

We need to think of alcohol in terms of a double standard—what applies to adults and what applies to children.

Yoast also spoke of other issues in terms of "rights" that should be assured by public policies. "All people who don't want to consume alcohol or can't do so for health or other reasons have the right to be safeguarded from pressures to drink and to be supported in their non-drinking behavior." Individuals or families facing serious alcohol problems also should have a right to treatment.

"What we have to remember is that youths are not the primary producers, promoters, distributors, sellers, and users of alcohol, which is why we have to stop focusing on youths and start focusing on ourselves." □

PROGRESS ALONG THE BORDER

By Rick McGaffigan, Saul Cano, Avelino Jimenez, and Kim Herbstritt

Our goal was to produce early reductions in problems to provide the project with visibility and legitimacy.

YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE CONSIDERED IT A "RITE OF PASSAGE" FOR DECADES: crossing the border

into Mexico to drink. The attraction? Mexico's minimum drinking age of 18 combined with inexpensive alcohol—not to mention the fact that enforcement of the minimum drinking age was not really a priority for police in the border towns drawing hordes of underage partygoers.

But rising concerns on both sides of the border regarding the health, safety, and economic problems related to drug use, drug trafficking, and heavy alcohol consumption by young people led to a binational effort in 1997 called The San Diego/Tijuana Border Project (see *Prevention File*, Vol.12, No.3, Summer 1997).

The Border Project is a coordinated effort of the county of San Diego and the Institute for Public Strategies. It focuses on reducing alcohol and other drug problems along the entire U.S.-Mexican border through a collab-

orative, binational system to develop and support public health approaches to prevention.

Since its start the project has worked to reduce cross-border teen and binge drinking in the San Diego-Tijuana region through the formation of a

policy-focused, public health, prevention model that can work along the Southwest border.

"Cross-border drinking issues are an appropriate place to begin this binational public health work. Since alcohol is a legal product, groundwork had already been laid in terms of existing regulations and policies that can be examined and then either adapted or discarded in favor of new, more effective policies," says James Baker, executive director of Institute for Public Strategies (IPS).

However, the Project was challenged from the outset by the complexity of the cross-border drinking problem, including two languages, several cultures, and the many layers of federal, state and local government agencies on both sides of the border. Longtime residents in the border region recognize the existence of a U.S. culture, a Mexican culture, and a so-called border-culture that is hybrid of both.

"This complex cultural character, as well as the long-standing cross-border drinking troubles, had long contributed to the myth in the San Diego region that the situation was hopeless. Indeed, when the project began, the cynical verdict that 'these problems will never be solved' was heard on both sides of the border," says Baker.

IPS and its partners decided early on to use an environmental model that takes into account the social, physical, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to problems, and involves many agencies and individuals from both the U.S. and Mexico.

"Our goal was to produce early reductions in problems to provide the project with visibility and



The Border Project is not primarily an enforcement-based project, though enforcement has played an early and important role. Rather, it's a public health project, with plans to open a public health facility at the border crossing.

legitimacy, while maintaining a steady, patient, long-term strategy, realizing that complex problems in a complex social environment wouldn't be solved by short-term or simple solutions," says Baker.

According to Baker, binational collaboration has been the key to creating positive change in the border region. The Project's major accomplishment has been galvanizing the interest of the community, policy makers, law-enforcement personnel, and journalists around alcohol issues. Those early accomplishments created a public understanding that the broader, intractable alcohol and other drug problems that have permeated the border region can be solved.

"The initial successes of this project, which were corroborated by scientific survey data, provide the foundation for our vision of what the entire U.S.-Mexican border community could become. This vision depends on maintaining a focus on economic development and higher health and safety standards that will reduce

the alcohol and other drug problems that have plagued the region," says Baker.

The Border Project Model

The Border Project design incorporates an environmental prevention model that is driven by policy change. The primary tools employed were

San Diego County—Tijuana Border Project Strategic Approach



community organizing, media advocacy, data collection, and community/law-enforcement partnerships. This model can be illustrated as five interlocking circles; the nucleus represents the

synergistic effect of all the components working in unison to achieve the defined environmental strategy.

In partnership with IPS, the Maryland-based Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation has conducted the evaluation of the Project.

"The real-time sharing of data has been

instrumental in the Project's early success. The active interchange between scientific data collection and on-the-street prevention work acted as a vehicle for identifying problems, designing appropriate interventions, measuring Project success, and then revising prevention approaches based on the data. Data collection is an ongoing Project component rather than a scorecard issued after completion," says Baker.

The initial challenge of the Border Project was to raise cross-border drinking problems higher on the public agenda. Early interventions in the Project centered substantially on law-enforcement activity that received high-visibility news coverage. Project staff worked closely with police officials to craft a law-enforcement component called Operation Safe Crossing.

The action at the border, which involved public health workers, elected officials, youth volunteers, parents, and police officers working side by side in two countries, became a magnet for television news.

"The law-enforcement-community mix of Operation Safe Crossing became a vehicle to showcase the survey-identified problem components, and to provide authentic voices from the community with opportunities to plant the seeds for later policy change," says Baker.

Many of the Project's initial successes coincided with the Operation Safe Crossing intervention's media coverage, such as policy changes in Mexico that reduced bar-front advertising, eliminated free drinks and cheap drink specials, and implemented responsible beverage service training for bar owners and servers.

At the start, Project staff focused on enforcement and news making, working with a handful



WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE BORDER PROJECT?

The Institute for Public Strategies has two major initiatives in the works to expand the work of the Border Project. They are:

- A Border Public Health Communication Center to lead regional and binational news making. The plan is to focus attention on a broad range of border-area public health issues, including HIV, TB, environmental pollution, and related economic issues. Once in operation, the Center will provide training and technical assistance to coalitions along the border states and into the interior of Mexico. The Project plans to match up "sister" communities on both side of the border.
- A focus on pharmaceutical and illicit drug issues through the same binational, community-based coalitions that currently are working on teen and binge drinking. The San Diego-Tijuana Alcohol Policy Coalition formed by this project will expand to the borders region in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

of community collaborators. But Baker says that lasting solutions require complex community changes.

"Parallel to enforcement and media work, IPS has been laying a community-based framework for enduring policy change on both sides of the border through the ongoing expansion of a strong, increasingly formal, binational policy coalition."

Binational Policy Council

IPS has been instrumental in the creation of the Binational Policy Council. BPC work groups operate independently on specific policy goals on both sides of the border, as well as collectively to establish a long-range public health and safety vision for the border community.

"The BPC is a model for international community organizing, and is designed to be an umbrella organization to formulate and promote recommendations to policy makers in both countries. The success of this group depends upon the use of research and media advocacy to implement its recommendations," says Baker.

In Tijuana, the BPC organized a community alcohol policy march in October 2000. Over 250 people wound their way from the downtown commercial zone to City Hall, where they presented the mayor with over 1,000 signatures on a petition supporting of the following recommendations:

- Eliminate after-hour permits for bars and clubs
- Close bars at 2 a.m., so they are in line with California closing times
- Create a citizen's advisory board for all new alcohol licenses.

The march received extensive television media coverage on both sides of the border. Maria Antonieta Olvera, prevention coordinator of Tijuana-based *Isesalud*, who led the march, said: "We are continuing to build broad community support for alcohol reform to create a safer community through policy change for Tijuana residents."

In San Diego, BPC developed the following recommendations that it plans to present to the San Diego City Council:

- Outlaw alcohol promotions that encourage minors to drink in Mexico
- Regular and consistent enforcement of underage alcohol laws on the U.S. side of the border for returning teen drinkers
- Enhanced public health and safety standards in the Border Safety Zone, a zoning region encompassing the high-traffic area used by border crossers.

BPC continues to support law-enforcement operations at the border in the form of multi-jurisdictional driving-under-the-influence operations, establishment of a command post to process intoxication testing, and the addition of holding cells and transport vans, allowing officers to return to the streets rapidly.

But the Border Project is not primarily an enforcement-based project, though enforcement has played an early and important role. Rather, it's a public health project, with plans to open a public health facility at the border crossing. Plans, which have been approved by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, call for a public health clinic, personal crisis support center, and a facility for alcohol and other drug screening and intervention.

The BPC has created an opportunity for community organizations, businesses, military, health departments, universities, and law-enforcement agencies from both sides of the border to work together as never before. Expansion of the BPC to include coalitions from Mexican and U.S. border states to address regional problems collectively is a goal of IPS. Collaboration along the U.S.-Mexican border that incorporates this model can raise national attention to border issues among federal government officials in both countries," says Baker. □

Rick McGaffigan, Saul Cano, Avelino Jimenez, and Kim Herbstritt are with the Institute for Public Strategies, San Diego, CA.

SELLING SMOKING..

WHEN TOBACCO ADVERTISING
WAS BANNED FROM TELEVISION

IN 1968, Hollywood also jumped on the anti-tobacco bandwagon and the incidence of smoking in movies dropped considerably.

But, by the 1980s, movie screens were clouding up again. Today it's unusual to see a Hollywood

film that doesn't include a mega-star like Julia Roberts or Brad Pitt puffing away, and researchers say that's bad news for teen smoking.

Especially concerned by this trend is pediatrician and researcher James Sargent, MD, of

Dartmouth Medical School. A study he and colleagues did in 1996 found that teenagers were far more likely to smoke if they had seen their favorite stars lighting up on screen (*Tobacco Control* No.10, 2001).

Also concerned is Stanton Glantz, PhD, a University of California, San Francisco researcher and author of *The Cigarette Papers* and *Tobacco War*. Glantz's research has found that, in the 1990s, nine out of 10 Hollywood films—including a number of children's movies—dramatized the use of tobacco.

Glantz says that nonsmoking teens whose favorite stars frequently smoke on screen are 16 times more likely to have positive attitudes toward smoking. Worse, Glantz has uncovered tobacco-industry documents indicating that tobacco marketers consider smoking in movies to be far more effective than television ads ever were.

"With VCRs and home-movie channels, adolescents today are seeing far more movies than ever," Sargent told *Prevention File* in an interview. "And younger children are seeing movies they really should not be seeing."

Sargent said he began his research studying the reasons why teenagers take up smoking. He found that their reasons were totally different from those of adults.

"Adolescents are socially motivated," he said. "They're not like adults—they don't have a cigarette when they first get out of bed in the morning. They have their first cigarette (of the day) when they get to the schoolyard, where all their friends are."

Sargent was curious if celebrities had an effect



IN THE MOVIES?



Studies of recent Hollywood movies show that smoking continues to be three times more frequent on screen than off.

on teen smoking because, "Media is such a big part of adolescent lives that the stars are like friends to them. Only the stars are more salient, more powerful, more sexy."

Sargent and his team began by asking teens to name their favorite stars. Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, Drew Barrymore, and Leonardo DiCaprio were among the choices. They then researched how often those stars smoked in movies.

For adolescents whose favorite stars smoked in only one film, the odds of being higher on the smoking index were .78. For those whose favorite stars smoked in two films, the odds of being higher on the smoking index were 1.5. For those whose favorite stars smoked in three or more films, the odds were 3.1.

Among the teens who had never smoked, those who chose stars who were smokers in three or

more films were much more likely to have favorable attitudes toward smoking.

The study's conclusions: "Adolescents who choose movie stars who use tobacco on screen are significantly more likely to have an advanced smoking status and more favorable attitudes toward smoking than adolescents who choose nonsmoking stars. This finding supports the proposition that the portrayal of tobacco use in contemporary motion pictures, particularly by stars who are admired by adolescents, contributes to adolescent smoking."

Sargent said he believes that effect may be even

more potent when teens see their favorite stars smoking in real life as well as in films.

"Brad Pitt smokes a lot off screen as well as on screen," Sargent said. "So do Leonardo DiCaprio, Drew Barrymore, Julia Roberts, and Winona Ryder."

Sargent's first prescription is for parents to reduce the number of movies their children see.

"I'm just shocked at the number of parents who allow their children to see R-rated films. You wouldn't want your child exposed to radiation. Why expose them to this?"

He also believes Hollywood should behave more responsibly.

SMOKING ON SCREEN

In March 2002 the Hollywood Entertainment Museum will mount an interactive exhibition documenting the image of smoking as portrayed in movies and other mass media. Called *Smoke, Lies and Videotape*, the exhibit "will be designed to capture how Hollywood's depiction of smoking and tobacco products was influenced by the social attitudes during various periods of our mass-media culture," museum president Phyllis Caskey said. The exhibit, slated to run for 10 months, will aim to deter smoking by reaching teenage and young-adult audiences at risk of becoming smokers, while demonstrating through moving, still, and audio images the history of mass media's role in creating a desire to use tobacco products. The exhibit is supported by a \$650,000 grant from the California Department of Health Services' Tobacco Control Section. Concurrent with the opening of the exhibition in the Museum, located at 7021 Hollywood Blvd., an Internet-based companion piece will be unveiled on the Museum's Website (www.hollywoodmuseum.com) and remain there as a virtual exhibit.

THUMBS DOWN

The ninth Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! report card, issued by the American Lung Association of Sacramento, CA, shows the depiction of tobacco use in Hollywood movies was up during 1999-2000, after hitting an eight-year low in 1998-99. The report is based on a survey of the top U.S. box office hits from May 1999 through April 2000.

Hollywood got a B, a C and two Ds, under a grading system that counts the frequency of tobacco use in movies and measures the way in which teenage volunteers who screened and evaluated the movies perceived it. "Extensive tobacco use in movies suggests that smoking is more common in society than it actually is," said the report. "When tobacco use is viewed as a social norm," said the Lung Association, "it implies that smoking is acceptable and is another factor in encouraging young people to use tobacco."

The movie industry got a B for "the extent and type of tobacco use," even though the depiction of tobacco use was well over the running nine-year average. Sixty percent of the movies screened showed at least one incident of tobacco use, compared to 50 percent among all movies that have been evaluated since the survey was first conducted in 1992. By contrast, 34 percent of the movies were smoke-free, compared with just 24 percent of all movies surveyed during the '90s.

In the matter of which characters use tobacco, Hollywood got a C. Actors who had top billing lit up in 60 percent of the 50 movies that were analyzed—up from 52 percent in the last survey, but consistent with the nine-year running average.

The extensive depiction of characters smoking in enclosed areas, such as homes, businesses, and autos, earned the movie business a D in the subject of "where tobacco is used." Hollywood got its other D for the "perceived messages on tobacco use"—that is, whether the movies offered pro-tobacco or anti-tobacco messages.

"When stars or featured actors light up in a movie," said the report, "it sends a powerful message to young people that tobacco use is an acceptable, even desirable activity."

Sargent said moviemakers tend to use cigarettes "thoughtlessly and recklessly." For example, in the film "Great Expectations," starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Ethan Hawke, there is a scene in which the two stars meet at a sophisticated nightclub. They have broken up, and Paltrow is with another man, but she still seems interested in Hawke.

"Ethan Hawke takes out a pack of Kools and offers her one; it's a very charged scene," Sargent said. "But why did they have to use cigarettes? It's a lazy way to say what they want to say. Why couldn't they have used dialogue instead?"

Sargent said that restricting Hollywood has been nearly impossible. "Every time restrictions are proposed, they scream about creative freedom and First Amendment rights."

He backs recommendations being made by Glantz on his Smoke-Free Movies Website (<http://smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu/solution>).

Glantz suggests four steps Hollywood can take "to get smoking out of the movies without impinging on anyone's creative freedom."

These steps include:

- **Certify No Pay-Offs.**

Producers should post a certificate in the credits at the end of the movie declaring that nobody on the production received anything of value (cash money, free cigarettes or other gifts, free publicity, interest-free loans, or anything else) from anyone in exchange for using or displaying tobacco.

- **Require Strong Antismoking Ads.** Studios and theaters should require a genuinely strong antismoking ad (not one produced by a tobacco company) to run before any film with any tobacco presence, regardless of its MPAA rating.

Non-smoking teens whose favorite stars frequently smoke on screen are 16 times more likely to have positive attitudes toward smoking.

- **Stop Identifying Tobacco Brands.**

There should be no tobacco brand identification or the presence of tobacco brand imagery (such as billboards) in the background of any movie scene.

- **Rate Smoking Movies "R."**

Any film that shows or implies tobacco use should be rated "R."

Glantz has accused Hollywood of breaking its 1989 agreement not to use cigarette product placement in exchange for money.

His Smoke-Free Movies organization is running a series of full-page ads in *The New York Times* and other publications, questioning Hollywood's tobacco use and calling for action.

"For years, the world's largest and most powerful tobacco companies secretly paid off Hollywood to get their addictive and lethal products into the movies," one ad reads. "The payoff supposedly stopped in 1989, after the scandal grew so obvious it brought threats of federal regulation . . . The problem is, the industry's self-policed ban on Hollywood tobacco payoffs hasn't worked. There's more smoking in the movies today than before 1989 . . . Either people in Hollywood are still on the take, in which case they're corrupt. Or else they're doing Big Tobacco's dirty work for free—in which case they're stupid."

Glantz's research has found that Marlboros-Philip Morris' No. 1 brand of cigarettes-have been featured in at least 28 of Hollywood's top-grossing movies in the past 10 years.

"They don't even bother to be true-to-life," reads Glantz's ad. "Studies of recent Hollywood movies show that smoking continues to be three times more frequent on screen than off. What's more, it's the rich, powerful, and glamorous who smoke in movies, when in reality it's the young, depressed, poor, and least educated who smoke."

Also active in the fight against tobacco in the movies is the American Lung Association, Sacramento-Emigrant Trails chapter, which received a \$1.5 million grant from the California Department of Health Services to lead a new level of action in seeking solutions to the problem of tobacco use in entertainment-industry productions. The organization recently premiered a documentary film called "Scene Smoking: Cigarettes, Cinema and the Myth of Cool

in Los Angeles," addressing First Amendment rights and social responsibility as it pertains to tobacco depiction in film. It will issue a report, *The Tobacco Industry's 'Love Affair' With Hollywood*, in October. The chapter also has an ongoing program called Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down!, through which young people

evaluate movies according to tobacco usage (see sidebar). For more information visit its Website at www.saclung.org. ☐

Book Review

Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World

By David T. Courtwright (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. 2001)

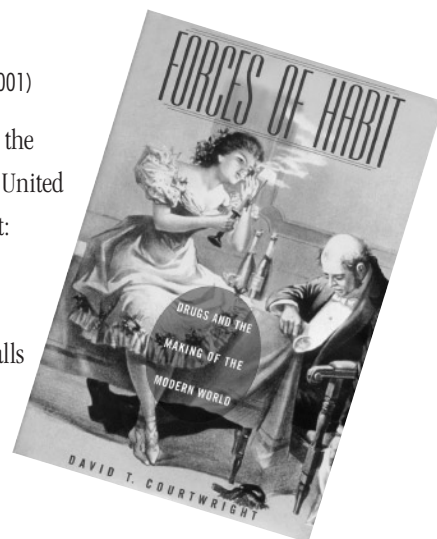
■ People who think they understand how we got to the current state of affairs regarding drug policy in the United States would be well-advised to read "Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World."

David Courtwright, a history professor at the University of North Florida, writes about what he calls a psychoactive revolution whereby "people everywhere acquired progressively more and more potent means of altering their ordinary waking consciousness."

"One of the signal events of world history, this development had its roots in the transoceanic commerce and empire-building of the early-modern period—that is, the years from about 1500 to 1789. "Forces of Habit" describes how early-modern merchants, planters, and other imperial elites succeeded in bring about the about the confluence of the world's psychoactive resources and then explores why, despite enormous profits and tax revenues, their successors changed their minds and restricted or prohibited many—but not all—drugs."

"Forces of Habit" uses the term "drugs" to include a long list of psychoactive substances, licit and illicit, from caffeine and cannabis to alcohol and amphetamines. He examines questions such as: "Why are coffee, tobacco, and marijuana available the world over, but not peyote or qat? Why are alcohol and tobacco legal, but not heroin or cocaine? What drives the drug trade, and how has it become what it is today—a vast checkered pattern of use and abuse, medicine and recreation, commerce and interdiction?"

The first section of "Forces of Habit" describes the confluence of the world's principal psychoactive resources, concentrating on alcoholic and caffeinated beverages, tobacco, opiates, cannabis, coca, cocaine, and sugar. It's followed by sections on drugs and commerce and drugs and power.



New Battleground

THE NEW BATTLEGROUND IN THE TOBACCO WARS IS, WELL, THE GROUND. People across the country and the world are mounting campaigns against tobacco litter—those ubiquitous cigarette butts with the half-life of plutonium that are found on beaches, parks, playgrounds, sidewalks, and along

roadways everywhere.

“People don’t understand that the filter of a cigarette is designed to last forever, so they just toss it out thinking that it will just go away. But it doesn’t,” said Margaret Hodge, of the Volusia County, Florida, recycling program.

As part Earth Month activities this year, a group called

Keep Volusia County Beautiful organized a county-wide “Can It” project that delivered more than 700 coffee cans renovated into cigarette-butt-disposal cans to local businesses so that it’s easier for smokers to dispose of their butts properly.

But some people in Maine are not satisfied with anti-tobacco litter campaigns that count on the goodwill of smokers. That state is considering a bill that places a nickel deposit on cigarette butts to provide an economic incentive for litter control.

The measure would work much like Maine’s

bottle-return-deposit law by assigning a surcharge to tobacco products. All cigarette companies would be required to print a “5-cent deposit” label on each filter or cigarette paper tube. A package of 20 cigarettes would include a \$1 surcharge to provide the nickel-per-butt reimbursement. Diligent smokers who save their butts rather than tossing them on the ground would get their money back at existing bottle recycling centers. Those who persist in littering the landscape with cigarette debris would forfeit their deposit to butt scavengers eager to earn some money.

The idea behind the bill came from Peter Daigle, an executive with Maine’s Lafayette Hotel chain who was tired of picking up cigarette butts from the hotel’s parking lots. He said staff members at hotels spend 45 minutes to an hour each day picking up discarded cigarette butts.

“The hour-per-day cost translates to \$4,000 per year. Multiply that by the estimated 25,000 businesses that deal with this problem and that’s \$100 million,” he said in the *Bangor News*.

“This is significant money.”

“This bill will get right to the cigarette litter issue,” said Rep. Joseph Brooks (D-Winterport), who sponsored the bill. “We’re looking at butts everywhere. I think we need to get them off the streets and off the sidewalks because this is a health issue. My bill will discourage people from continuing to smoke or to start smoking. It’s a \$1-per-pack charge on top of the \$3 or \$4 they’re already paying.”

Brooks estimates that \$100 million would be collected by the state from the surcharge. The



in the Tobacco Wars

We're looking at butts everywhere. I think we need to get them off the streets and off the sidewalks because this is a health issue.

lawmaker further estimates that half of the discarded butts would be returned for the deposit. The remainder would pay redemption centers to bag the returned butts and to cover the costs associated with burying or incinerating the smoking litter.

Oregon lawmakers are taking yet another approach. They are considering a bill that would require a label on cigarette packs urging the proper disposal of cigarette butts as a way to reduce littering. Under the measure, labels would be required on cigarette packages that state, "Please dispose of the waste from this product properly. Littering is illegal and ill-mannered." Oregon tobacco distributors pay a 25-cents-a-pack tax on cigarettes that don't carry the warning label. The tax revenue would be used to build or repair schools.

In San Diego children took their complaints about cigarette butts being tossed into toddler sandboxes in local parks to the City Council. Their case was bolstered by help from the Palavra Tree, one of the San Diego County Department of Health Services' collaboratives for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention. Its executive director, Cleo Malone, checked data available from the University of California and learned, for example, that in 1999, 648 children throughout the state had been reported ill and, in some cases, hospitalized after ingesting discarded tobacco products. One-third of that number were from San Diego County.

Palavra Tree decided to mobilize kids who use the neighborhood parks to become data collectors

on tobacco litter in sandboxes. Children ranging in age from 7 to 12 picked up extinguished cigarette butts from the lots and then counted them.

"Just from the surface, we had 648 butts in one sandlot, 518 in another, and 358 in yet another," Malone says.



Armed with this data, kids checked other sandlots in parks and playgrounds around San Diego and tabulated the results. The sampling turned up large numbers of butts in sandboxes throughout the city. The upshot of their efforts was the Tot Lot Law, an ordinance banning smoking or use of any tobacco product within 50 feet of a park sandbox. The City Council passed it unanimously in November 2000. Offenders face a \$50 citation.

Concerns over tobacco litter are not limited to the United States. According to "Consumption and Production Waste: Another Externality of



Just from the surface, we had 648 butts in one sandlot, 518 in another, and 358 in yet another.

Tobacco Use,” (*Tobacco Control*, Spring 1999), in 1995 an estimated 5.535 trillion cigarettes (27,675 million cartons and 276,753 million packages) were sold by the tobacco industry globally.

“Some of the wastes from these products were properly deposited, but a large amount of tobacco consumption waste ends up in the environment. Some is recovered during environmental cleanup days. For the past eight years (1990-1997), cigarette butts have been the leading item found during the International Coastal Cleanup Project; they accounted for 19.1 percent of all items collected in 1997,” said authors Thomas E Novotnya and Feng Zhaob.

They say that the cigarette-butt problem may be mitigated through several channels other than general tobacco control efforts, including the following:

- Laws against littering could be better enforced relative to cigarette butts.
- Additional taxes could be levied on cigarette products that could be directed to environmental cleanup efforts for consumption and production waste.
- The tobacco industry should improve the biodegradability of filters, reduce packaging waste, educate its customers about their responsibility to the environment, and strive to responsibly manage production waste in developing countries as well as developed countries.

- Administrators of worksites and public buildings should be encouraged or required to supply appropriate disposal mechanisms at all building entrances (this might even be cost-effective in terms of public image, janitorial costs, and fire prevention).
- Increased public awareness campaigns about the magnitude and prevention of tobacco consumption and production waste could be developed through partnerships among environmental groups, health organizations, and environmental protection agencies.

Faced with a report noting that cigarette butts account for “more than half of litter items” in the state of New South Wales, the City Council in Sydney, Australia, adopted a Litter Reduction Strategy. It is a coordinated response to ongoing issues of discarded cigarette butts, as well as other waste-management issues. The plan includes actions to get all businesses and municipal buildings to purchase ashtrays—at city-subsidized prices—for disposing of butts, placing ashtrays at bus stops and taxi ranks, and education programs on cigarette littering.

Research conducted on littering behavior by Australia’s Beverage Industry Environment Council found that:

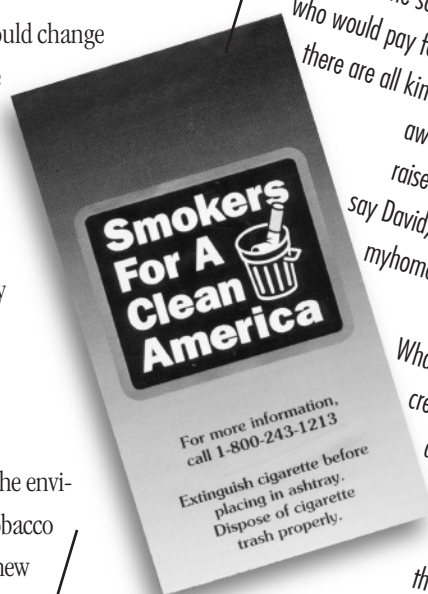
- The lack of bins was not a major factor in littering.
- Bin use is more common from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and littering most common about 4 p.m.
- Many people are not consciously aware they are littering.
- Cigarette butts are the most likely items to be littered.

- Four out of five people observed littering cigarettes said they did not consider them to be litter.
- More than half of smokers said they would change behavior if they were more aware of the issues and their potential environmental impact.
- When asked why they littered, the most common response was laziness.

But concerns about the environmental impact of tobacco litter are not behind a new anti-butt measure being considered by Utah lawmakers. They are looking at ways to outlaw underage access to ashtrays and butts.

The goal is to prevent kids from plucking relightable cigarettes from public ash receptacles. Sponsoring Republican Rep. Mike Thompson said that the idea was sparked by a complaint from a client about teenagers smoking scavenged butts.

"There are containers made now that allow a cigarette to drop in and not come out again. Enclosed containers should be the rule, not the exception," he said.



AN ASHTRAY WITH EVERY PACK

About six years ago, three young people in Connecticut launched the *No Butts About it* campaign to "help rid the earth of cigarette-butt litter." Their idea was to make it very easy for smokers to be responsible in disposing of butts. The youths wrote to "lots of state representatives and senators, and to all of the governors" to ask them to propose legislation requiring cigarette companies to include a disposable ashtray in each pack of cigarettes that they sell.

"That way, the solution to littering is easily available to smokers. And the cigarette companies are the ones who would pay for the ashtrays, which is fair since it is their product that is being littered. We know that there are all kinds of funds set up by cigarette companies to help the public through education and awareness. This would be a useful way to spend some of that money because it would raise awareness of a big problem, and would benefit smokers and nonsmokers alike," say David, Amy, and Allie Steinmetz on their Website at member.aol.com/_ht_a/teamstien/myhomepage/.

They are not asking for donations or funding or anything "except your time." What they are asking for is help in spreading the word to smokers. They have created a poster with their slogan "The Earth Is Not Your Ashtray" and found disposable ashtrays that are thin and small so that they fit into a pocket.

"Here's what you can do. You can hang the poster up at work, in your town, on trailheads, at your beaches and parks, anywhere that people are smoking. And put the ashtrays nearby so that once the smokers become aware of the problem, they have an easy solution to it. If you are really into it, then send the poster to your elected officials and get them involved. Do whatever you can, or want, to do—every little bit helps," they say.

The Steinmetz kids may be on to something. Ann Kirk, of Keep Smryna (Georgia) Beautiful, says that in Japan smoking is still more common than in the United States. The difference is the lack of discarded butts littering the landscape. Many Japanese smokers carry "elegant little portable ashtrays. You just close the lid and put it in your pocket," Kirk said in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

Anti-tobacco litter activists are using technology to get organized. The Internet is now littered with sites that offer advice about combating the problems of tobacco waste. For example, cigarettelitter.org is the site for a not-for-profit organization dedicated to running educational

campaigns aimed at significantly reducing the amount of cigarette litter. Even tobacco-giant Phillip Morris touts its anti-tobacco litter efforts on its Website at www.philpmorrisusa.com. ☐



GLOBAL ALCOHOL POLICY:

WHAT DO INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS HAVE TO DO WITH LOCAL ALCOHOL POLICY? Plenty,

according to papers presented at both the Global Alcohol Policy Advocacy Conference in August 2000 and the World Health Organization Ministerial Conference on Young People and Alcohol in February 2001.

The papers, by independent Canadian consultant Jim Grieshaber-Otto, PhD, outline the inherent incompatibility of the trade agreements, which promote the freer flow of goods, and local efforts to minimize alcohol-related harm.

Three key provisions of international trade agreements affect what individual nations can do to control the use of alcohol within their borders. These provisions are part of most trade agreements, specifically the North American Free Trade Agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and many of the dozen-or-so new World Trade Organization agreements that became effective in 1995. They are:

National Treatment—This is a centerpiece of most trade agreements and has been called the “golden rule of international trade law.” It requires governments to extend to their treaty partners the best treatment that they give to domestic businesses. A 1989 GATT panel interpreted this to mean not only that governments

must supply equal treatment for imports; they must also supply “effective equality of opportunities.” Thus, the national treatment provision is very broad in scope.

State Monopolies—The trade agreements allow the existence of state monopolies (including state alcohol monopolies), but the activities of these monopolies are restricted. This is because monopolies, by definition, inhibit the ability of the private sector, including foreign entities, to conduct business.

Some of the trade agreements require that state monopolies make purchases or sales “solely in accordance with commercial considerations, including price, quality, availability, marketability, transportation, and other conditions of purchase or sale” (GATT Article XVII). With respect to state alcohol monopolies, this means that they cannot reduce the amount of alcohol they buy or sell for public health purposes unless the reduction is the result of commercial considerations.

Quantitative Restrictions—Many international trade agreements reduce or eliminate quantity-based restrictions on trade. For example, quotas on imports, including imports of alcoholic products, are—for the most part—prohibited. Thus, under the trade agreements, nations lose an important means of controlling the amount of alcohol that they import.

These provisions limit local efforts to prevent the harm caused by alcohol. In fact, the provisions of the international trade agreements affect precisely those prevention strategies that, according to a 1994 study entitled *Alcohol and the Public Good* by G. Edwards et. al. (Oxford University Press, 1994), are most widely used and considered the most promising.

Let’s examine how this occurs. One of the most promising ways to prevent alcohol-related problems is to increase the price of alcoholic beverages. Nations do this by taxing alcohol. But under the broad national treatment provision of the trade agreements, state governments are constrained in their ability to tax alcohol; they cannot tax it in ways that even incidentally protect domestic production from foreign competition.

For example, local governments may wish to discourage people from developing a taste for new foreign alcohol products, especially those with higher alcohol content than local products. However, an attempt to “freeze” preferences for traditional local alcoholic beverages through taxation is not allowed because it is considered discriminatory under the national treatment provision. In 1996, a WTO panel ruled that Chile could not tax foreign spirits with high alcohol content at a higher rate than *piñisco*, the Chilean liquor with low alcohol content.

WHO'S IN CONTROL?

GATT has long been used by the United States and Europe to challenge the pricing and taxation of alcohol in Canada. A GATT ruling forced the Ontario government to lower its prices for alcohol because some of its minimum price requirements were seen to discriminate against cheaper American products. In addition, the United States, under a GATT provision, tried unsuccessfully to force the Canadian government to eliminate the environmental tax on aluminum beer cans as giving preferential treatment to Canadian beer sold in bottles.

Similar constraints on taxation of alcohol have occurred in Europe. The levels of Norwegian taxes on wine and Danish excise duties on spirits were ruled illegal under provisions of European trade agreements. In Asia, WTO panels struck down differential taxes on imported alcoholic products in Japan and Korea.

The role of monopolies

High price is not the only way governments can reduce the accessibility of alcohol. State monopolies are another method of regulating the amount of alcohol that is sold. But under the monopoly provision of the international trade agreements, state monopolies are not allowed, among other things, to protect domestic products from foreign ones. In Canada, for example, the provincial alcohol monopolies were required to give more

exposure to foreign products. Canada's counter-complaint, to eliminate preferences for local products in U.S. state alcohol-control systems, was also accepted, although it has still not been implemented.

The monopoly provisions of the trade agreements apply to services and investments related

to alcohol, as well as to the product itself. Thus, for example, governments could violate international trade agreements if they limit the volume of alcohol products sold, the total sales of alcohol, or the number of retail alcohol outlets in a community or region.

In Finland, the national alcohol monopoly



Photo by B. Ryan

was weakened after that country applied to join the European Union and when it became subject to the European Free Trade Agreement in 1994. At that time, its alcohol monopoly, Alko, was privatized, and its monopoly rights, were dismantled, with the exception of the Social Affairs Ministry alcohol policy mandate in regard to the retail monopoly.

Another strategy for preventing harm caused by alcohol is used by governments when they restrict or control advertising. In Sweden, the government adopted a law in 1979 that limited the advertising of alcohol. The law banned radio and television advertising of spirits, wines, strong beer and beer, and it banned the advertising of spirits, wines, and strong beer in certain publications. A recent ruling by the European Court of Justice found the law to be an obstacle to the free flow of both goods and services and thus contrary to the rules of the European Union (which are similar to those of the WTO). The Court ruled that the ban on advertising was a violation of the national treatment provision because it affected foreign (unfamiliar) alcoholic products more than domestic (familiar) ones.

But there is more to the story. Not only do the provisions of the trade agreements undermine the most promising strategies for the prevention of harm caused by alcohol described in *Alcohol and the Public Good*, these same provisions can be expected to increase consumption of alcohol. Under the agreements, alcohol becomes cheaper as taxes are lowered, more accessible as state monopolies are restricted, and more desirable to consumers as products—both new and old—are promoted.

Exceptions for public health

The international trade agreements do allow for exceptions for public health. However, these exceptions are limited in scope and narrowly interpreted. In fact, only once in the 50-year history of GATT and the WTO has a nation been successful in exempting a law from the provisions of the trade agreements for public health reasons. That

occurred in the case of the French ban on the import of asbestos. Even Europe's proposed import ban on Canadian beef that had been injected with growth hormones was ruled to be illegal.

Alarming to public health advocates is the way in which the exceptions are granted. They are decided by a panel of trade experts who meet behind closed doors and who are concerned with treaty obligations and not necessarily with public health.

As trade agreements are renegotiated, the pressure grows to make trade less and less regulated. At the same time, national laws that regulate goods and services, but which only incidentally affect trade, are challenged as being contrary to existing international agreements. And, negotiations for more—and expanded—international trade agreements continue. All of this has the effect of making international rules broader, deeper, and more likely to limit the ability of individual countries to control their own alcohol policies. But it is possible for things to change.

Grieshaber-Otto recommends that health professionals in the affected countries become actively involved to avoid increasing constraints on health-based alcohol policy.

He points out that:

- Negotiations now underway at the WTO to expand the General Agreements on Trade in Services—a key priority as this agreement already has serious ramifications for alcohol policy.
- Countries that are parties to trade agreements can include health representatives in their negotiating teams, and the health representatives can learn about trade issues.
- As a stopgap measure, member nations can gain short-term exemptions for existing laws concerning alcohol.
- Member nations can negotiate broad exemptions for health protection similar to those routinely granted for national security.
- Nations can develop international agreements on alcohol and public health that would take precedence over trade agreements.
- The World Health Organization can use its influence to affect international negotiations.

Time will tell whether international trade agreements continue to be in conflict with efforts to prevent harm associated with alcohol use. But one thing is certain. Trade agreements are now about much more than trade. They are also about alcohol policy. □

COMING TO GRIPS WITH ALCOHOL POLICY—DOWN UNDER

New Zealand has its first-ever National Alcohol Strategy, ending a process that began more than five years ago: National Alcohol Strategy, 2000-2003. It now represents government policy, and will be published as a Ministerial Committee on Drug Policy document as part of the National Drug Policy, 1998-2003.

"By focusing on the alcohol-related outcomes and approaches in the National Drug Policy," Alcohol Advisory Council chief executive officer Mike MacAvoy, says, "the National Alcohol Strategy provides a framework for action on alcohol issues. It lists practical strategies that can guide the work of individual agencies, and should help to ensure better coordination of effort across all of government on minimizing alcohol-related harm.

"The National Alcohol Strategy puts alcohol 'front and centre' in the effort to minimize substance-related harm, and challenges relevant government and nongovernment agencies to all try and move in the same direction to tackle alcohol problems in the community."

The document is available online at www.alcohol.org.nz.



Continued from inside front cover

More Data Needed

The federal government invests about \$12 billion each year in drug-enforcement programs, but doesn't have enough information to determine their effectiveness. Federal spending on such research amounts to less than \$1 for every \$100 set aside for enforcement. As a result, the nation's ability to evaluate whether its drug policies work is no better now than it was 20 years ago, when drug-control efforts began to accelerate,

says *Informing America's Policy on Illegal Drugs: What We Don't Know Keeps Hurting Us*, a new report from the National Research Council of the National Academies.

According to the report, the assessment of enforcement activities is severely hampered by an absence of adequate, reliable data on both drug consumption and the actual cost of illegal drugs. Such data are critical because a major goal of enforcement is to reduce drug supply and drive up costs, thereby cutting consumption. Work should begin immediately to develop better methods for obtaining both types of data.

"It is unconscionable for this country to continue to carry out a public policy of this magnitude and cost without any way of knowing whether, and to what extent, it is having the desired result. Our committee strongly recommends that a substantial, new, and robust research effort be undertaken to examine the various aspects of drug control, so that decision-making on these issues can be better supported by more factual and realistic evidence," said Charles F. Manski, PhD, chairman of the committee that wrote the report, and board of trustees professor in economics at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy sponsored the study. The National Research Council is the principal operating arm of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering. It is a private, nonprofit institution that provides independent advice on science and technology issues under a congressional charter. The report is available online at www.nap.edu.

Ecstasy in the Military

The use of Ecstasy, the club drug associated with young partygoers at Raves, is up in the United States Armed Forces. Drug-testing by the Air Force, Army, and Navy has indicated that use of the so-called "designer" drug is 12 times what it was two years ago.

Positive military test numbers in 1998 were .004 percent out of over 2.3 million tested. In 1999, that number increased to 0.019 percent out of just under 2.3 million, and in 2000 that number increased to 0.045 percent for about 2.3 million tests.

"We have seen an increase in the use of Ecstasy," Lieutenant-Colonel George Rhynedance, a Pentagon spokesman, said. "It is a drug that is popular in our culture and our service members are also members of that culture."

But Ecstasy use in the military is small relative to the civilian population, which is increasing exponen-

tially. ONDCP reports that federal seizures increased from 130,000 dosage units in 1998 to 900,000 in 1999, and will be even higher when year 2000 data is complete.

"We are concerned about this issue because of its impact on recruiting and readiness. The Department of Defense recognized in the early and mid-1990s that Ecstasy had the potential to become a significant problem, and began to introduce countermeasures to include initiation of mandatory drug testing for Ecstasy use in our active-duty forces. This began in 1997," said Rhynedance.

"Over the years, our ability to detect illegal drugs through our testing program has increased markedly, making it harder to use drugs in the military and not get caught. The message we are sending is that drug use in the military is a losing proposition. We will catch you, and we will deal with you through the legal system when we do."

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Ten Years Ago in *Prevention File* (Vol. 6, No. 3, Summer 1991)

CREATING A DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

THE FEDERAL DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ACT, which took effect in 1989, may be changing the ground rules for getting and holding a job in the United States.

Although the Act applies only to companies doing business with the federal government, many states are adopting similar legislation that broadens the impact of drug-free workplace requirements.

Measuring the effectiveness of the new laws has been difficult. There is a scarcity of reliable data about the extent of drug use on the job. One thing is certain, however. Tens of thousands of workers have received information about drugs and the risk of using them. They might not have received information without a nudge from the federal government. Many have been introduced to drug testing, either as applicants or as employees. Although the reliability of testing and its usefulness continue to generate controversy, the number of companies with one kind of testing program or another continues to grow.

From the standpoint of prevention, the Drug-Free Workplace Act can be considered a success in terms of raising the consciousness of both employers and employees about the issues surrounding and employees' use of alcohol or other drugs on the job.

While the Act makes no mention of drug testing, it requires that employers conduct drug awareness programs and notify employees in writing that the use of illegal drugs is prohibited in their workplace. It has spurred many companies to face the importance of having well-defined policies about the use of alcohol as well as illegal drugs by their employees, and to develop rehabilitation programs for those whose problems with alcohol or other drugs come to the surface.

The Act has helped call attention to the con-

sequences of alcohol and other drug problems among employees—absenteeism, risk of injury, higher health insurance and worker compensation claims, sloppy job performance, and low productivity. Successful lawsuits have also made employers more mindful of the legal liabilities they can face if an impaired employee is irresponsible for the injury of another employee or an outside, or incurs a property loss.

How bad is the problem? Cases that make the headlines—such as airline pilots caught flying after heavy drinking, or railroad crews testing

positive after a collision of trains—are evidence that the problem is there. But the extent is not easy to measure.

On the basis of drug-use surveys, the federal government estimates that 70 percent of illegal drug users are employed either full or part-time. The 1990 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse came up with an estimate that about 13 million American are *current* drug users, i.e., they used an illegal drug within the month preceding the survey. On the basis of that figure, there would be more than nine million drug users in the active workforce.

Editor's Note: A 1994 report by the National Academy of Sciences and sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found no connection between casual employee drug use and on-the-job performance (see Prevention File, Vol. 9, No. 4, Summer 1994).

